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ABSTRACT

Research has shown that cooperative learning rather than competitive behavior enhances students' achievement, self-esteem, and satisfaction while reducing performance anxiety. Although cooperation within a small group results in greater productivity and member satisfaction, it should be considered only as a means to an end, not an end in itself. A curriculum using cooperative learning incentive structures was implemented at a community college in California, in three speech communication courses with a total of 80 students. To improve this curriculum, information regarding innovative techniques and attitudes about the teaching of small group communication was gathered at the Northern California Bay Area Speech Teachers Conference. The tasks chosen for the pilot curriculum were based on E. Aronson's jigsaw model, which includes the concepts of group reward, individual learning, task specialization, and pro-social behaviors. Questionnaires completed by students at the end of the course indicated that cooperative learning techniques clarified the goals to the students while encouraging them to work toward a sense of trust, individual learning, individual satisfaction, and group cohesion in the classroom. A survey of teachers revealed that instructors consider cooperation in the classroom more conducive to student satisfaction and productivity than competition. (A list of definitions and an outline of the jigsaw learning model are included, and copies of the teacher survey and student contract are appended.) (SRT)

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COOPERATIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES
FOR TEACHING SMALL GROUP COMMUNICATION:
RESEARCH AND APPLICATION

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ABSTRACT

Currently, there is no generally accepted method for organizing and evaluating courses in small group communication. Research indicates that cooperative learning structures produce higher student achievement and self-esteem than competitive learning structures (Deutsch, 1949; Slavin, 1983). The following proposal will review current research in these areas and suggest applications of cooperative and competitive incentive structures for the development of a pilot curriculum for Community College Speech Communication departments. This discussion will aid in establishing a consensus among colleagues of major objectives in small group communication.

INTRODUCTION

Competitiveness is not inborn, but it seems to be so because it is learned so early. Undoubtedly it is communicated and fostered by the family and the media. But one of the major places where it is taught, indirectly but systematically, is the classroom (Aronson, 1978, p. 19).

Traditionally, competition has had a significant impact on learning in our educational system. However, research has shown that cooperative learning rather than competitive behavior enhances students' achievement, self-esteem, and satisfaction while reducing performance anxiety (Haines & McKeachie, 1967). In an attempt to incorporate cooperative learning structures in the Community College classroom, the Speech Communication Department of Cabrillo College has developed a pilot curriculum for use in its Small Group Communication courses. It is our hope that this curriculum will serve as the basis for a broader discussion of the theoretical and practical applications of cooperative incentive structures on learning.

In this paper, a review of the literature will show the benefits of cooperative learning strategies, while specifically focusing on Elliot Aronson's "Jigsaw Classroom" (1978). Although Aronson's research centered on the elementary school classroom, the findings should be applicable to post-secondary education. Because we found a need in our Community College Small Group Communication courses to encourage a cooperative environment while teaching group process techniques, we included the "Jigsaw" concept in our curriculum. To expand our perspective, input from colleagues was necessary. Therefore, we developed questionnaires which were completed and returned to us at our Northern California Bay Area Speech Teachers

Conference in May, 1985 (Appendix A). The results of the survey were presented at the Conference in May and are included on the agenda for the program on "Innovations in Teaching Small Group Communication" for the SCA convention. In this manner, regional issues of group communication will expand to include national concerns, and a larger consensus on teaching group process will be approached.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

For over thirty years researchers have been investigating the relationship between incentive structures and individual and group productivity (Faust, 1959; Deutsch, 1949). Research has focused on three basic structures: cooperative incentive, where two or more individuals are rewarded based on their performance as a group; a competitive incentive structure, where two or more individuals are compared, and those performing best are rewarded; an individualistic incentive structure, where students are rewarded based on personal performance, regardless of others' performances. Results have not been consistent (Slavin, 1983).

When comparing cooperative and competitive behavior in groups, Deutsch (1949) found that cooperative groups were higher in coordinated efforts, friendliness, and attentiveness than were the competitive groups (Aronson, 1978). However, the conditions under which cooperative behavior is most effective are dependent on the type of task that is undertaken. Miller and Hamblin (1963) found that cooperative incentive structures are most effective for interdependent tasks, whereas competitive or individualistic incentive structures are most effective for independent tasks (Slavin, 1983). Johnson and Johnson (1974) reported, on the other hand, that cooperative structures were best suited for all tasks except mechanical ones. Johnson, Maruyama, Johnson, Nelson, and Skon (1981) confirmed these results. They stated that "cooperation is better for productivity than competition or individualization for all but rote-decoding tasks." Their conclusion was that "educators may wish to considerably increase the use of cooperative learning procedures to promote higher student achievement" (Johnson et al., 1981, p.

58).

In his comprehensive review of the literature, Slavin (1983) concluded the following: 1) cooperative learning methods with group rewards and individual accountability increase student achievement, 2) cooperative learning methods with no group rewards do not necessarily enhance student productivity, 3) in groups which utilize task specialization, group reward rather than individual reward increases student achievement. Slavin calls for further research in the field of incentive structures and their applications in the classroom:

There is a continuing need for development and evaluation of new cooperative learning methods, both to solve practical problems of instruction and to expand the range of operationalizations of cooperative learning (Slavin, 1983, p. 443).

The original Jigsaw model for cooperative group learning was developed in 1978 by Aronson for use in the Texas public school system. The model was designed to enhance minority student performance in newly integrated schools. At the same time, its purpose was to reduce interracial conflict in the classroom by creating interdependent goals. Aronson cites Haines and McKeachie (1967) who found that cooperative discussion methods reduced student anxiety and increased student achievement and satisfaction. The Jigsaw model is just such a cooperative discussion method.

Jigsaw divides learning tasks among racially mixed groups of students. Each student is assigned a section of written material to learn and subsequently teach to groupmates. Students must learn all sections of the material in order to perform well on an individual test. This method encourages strong interpersonal communication in which students from

different backgrounds must listen to and question each other.

Aronson found that his hypotheses were confirmed (Aronson, Blaney, & Stephan, 1975). Results showed the following: Jigsaw students increased their liking for groupmates; they liked school more; they exhibited higher self-esteem; they were less competitive; and they considered their classmates to be capable teachers more so than did non-Jigsaw students. Strengthening Aronson's results was Geffner's (1978) extensive, systematic replication of the Jigsaw Classroom conducted in Watsonville, California. Geffner concluded that the cooperative nature of Jigsaw groups was the determining factor in producing pro-social behaviors. The use of innovative teaching methods, small groups, or competitive groups did not create the same results. The essential element for producing pro-social behavior is cooperation.

Research, then, indicates that cooperation rather than competition is an essential element in learning behavior. While recognizing the fact that cooperation within a small group results in greater productivity and member satisfaction, it must be remembered that "cooperation should not be an end in itself; rather, it should be a tool, when appropriate, to reach desired ends" (Burgoon, Heston & McCroskey, 1974). This tool seems highly applicable to the teaching of a small group communication course.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Cabrillo College, like many community colleges around the country, has a diverse student population. The demographics of a typical classroom include students from different cultural, socio-economic, and ethnic backgrounds. The average age of a Cabrillo College student is twenty-six and the majority are women, many of whom are re-entry students. Most students satisfy a part-time course load, although this is changing to a predominantly full-time schedule. This change is partly due to the fact that, for the first time in the history of California Community Colleges, a fifty dollar tuition fee has been imposed. More students must now work at part or full-time jobs in order to afford the increased cost of education. Ethnicity is also a changing factor at Cabrillo College. Hispanic, Oriental, and Black Americans look to Cabrillo to meet their educational needs. Cabrillo also offers extensive programs for those who are disabled.

A basic speech communication course could include any or all of the above-mentioned students. Both Public Speaking and Small Group Communication classes fulfill the General Education requirements for advanced degrees. While Public Speaking at Cabrillo follows a fairly standard format, in Small Group Communication the format is often less clear. Students and teachers alike express frustration caused by this lack of clarity. There is no general consensus among colleagues regarding objective evaluation procedures or discussion techniques which will satisfy course expectations; expectations which are unique to each individual instructor.

Because Small Group Communication seeks to serve such a diversity of students, it must meet a variety of both academic and socio-emotional

needs. Students expect to learn both theoretical and practical applications of small group research, but become frustrated when other class members do not share this common goal. Their frustration is manifested in poor attendance, a lack of cohesion, reticence, distrust of groupmates, anxiety, and, in general, diminished student satisfaction. Individual student achievement does not appear to be affected by these variables, except in extreme circumstances. Student frustration does impact teacher satisfaction.

Based on the research reviewed earlier, the incorporation of cooperative learning strategies should best resolve these problems. It was our intent to create a pilot curriculum based on the expressed needs of our colleagues in Speech Communication. This curriculum utilized cooperative learning incentive structures. Further development and discussion have occurred at both the Northern California Bay Area Speech Teachers Conference and the SCA Convention in Denver in November, 1985. It is our hope that these discussions will further academic development and evaluation of cooperative learning behaviors and will aid in the practical applications of these strategies in the teaching of Small Group Communication at the Community College level.

PROCEDURE

In order to incorporate cooperative learning strategies into our Small Group Communication courses, various tasks from Aronson's Jigsaw model (1975) were utilized. These activities are listed in Table 2. It is assumed that any combination of these tasks will facilitate a cooperative classroom. The Speech Communication Department at Cabrillo College offers approximately eight sections of Small Group Communication each semester. Each section consists of thirty students. At the beginning of the semester, students are randomly assigned to groups of five members each. In the pilot curriculum, students are then pre-tested as to basic knowledge regarding group communication and process. These test scores are used only for the purposes of teacher evaluation of student achievement.

The curriculum is then divided into three major assignments (Table 2). These tasks are selected on the basis of their applicability to individual learning, group reward, and the development of pro-social behaviors (Table 1). Other activities to be included in the course curriculum--as time permits--are also listed in Table 2. Evaluation of student performance is based on a contract agreed upon by both teacher and student at the beginning of the semester. Students understand that these contracts may be re-negotiated at any point (Appendix B). As the teacher facilitates cooperative interaction, providing a theoretical foundation for group communication, students are encouraged to develop high self-esteem and satisfaction with themselves and their performance in the course.

This curriculum was implemented at Cabrillo College in the Spring and Summer of 1985. Three Speech Communication classes, totalling eighty students, were chosen as models for the pilot study. During this time, Cabrillo College also hosted the Northern California Bay Area Speech Teachers Conference in Aptos, California from which we gathered information regarding innovative techniques and attitudes concerning the teaching of Small Group Communication. The remainder of this paper will focus on a discussion of the results of these procedures.

TABLE 1

DEFINITIONS

GROUP REWARD (GR):	Group grade measured by the cumulative efforts of group members in completing task.
INDIVIDUAL LEARNING (IL):	Individual grade measured by a specific task, e.g., research paper, journal, pre- and post-test on group process. Group reward score will be averaged with the individual learning score to determine overall performance in the class.
TASK SPECIALIZATION (TS):	Each group member is responsible for a unique subtopic relative to the larger task in order to achieve the group goal.
PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIORS (PSB):	Pro-social behaviors to be measured include: interpersonal attraction; liking for school; self-esteem; and competitiveness. Students may be measured by Aronson's (1975) Jigsaw test items. Other measurements to be used might include The Reciprocal Category System (Ober, Bentley, and Miller, 1971) or Bales Interaction Process Analysis (1950).
ATTENDANCE:	As attendance is an important criterion for student achievement in the community college, a standard for minimal and optimal attendance was created (see Appendix B).

TABLE 2
JIGSAW LEARNING MODEL
SAMPLE CURRICULUM

ACTIVITY	DESIRED EFFECT
1. Student-to-student Interviews	(PSB) Ice-breaker; initially anxiety-producing, but eventually creates a relaxed, cooperative atmosphere through informal student contact.
2. NASA Lost on the Moon	(GR, IL) A group exercise which utilizes Jigsaw strategy; students must pool their collective resources to score well.
3. Information-Gathering Discussion Group	(IL, GR, TS) Increases individual student achievement by requesting each group member to research a sub-topic of the group project. The group goal is to offer a coherent and factual presentation.
4. Fishbowl	(PSB) Students observe group process in concentric circles; thoughts regarding interaction can be verbalized.
5. Problem-Solution Group	(PSB, GR, TS) Group identifies a problem and seeks a solution. Students receive group reward. Task can only be completed with the full cooperation of groupmates.

6. Critique of an Art Form

(PSB, GR) Students work together to develop an evaluative statement regarding an art form of their choice.

7. Pre- and Post-Test

(IL) An evaluation method designed to test students' knowledge of group process; standardized to measure achievement; does not affect students' grades.

8. Attendance

(IL) An evaluative measure of student achievement.

DISCUSSION

The tasks chosen for the pilot curriculum were based on Aronson's Jigsaw model. This model includes the concepts of group reward, individual learning, task specialization, and pro-social behaviors which are critical to the development of criteria for a cooperative learning strategy. Attendance was also included as a part of the criteria due to its importance in a performance classroom.

In keeping with this model, our students participated in the following activities: an information-gathering group, a value group (which critiqued an art form), and/or a problem-solving group [depending on their contractual agreement (Appendix B)]. Group reward was based on an evaluation of the group's presentation in the classroom; individual learning was determined by the use of journals and research papers. Pre- and post-tests were administered in each of the classes; however, the results were inconclusive. Each group presentation was videotaped, and students were required to analyze their tapes within two weeks of the recording. One preparation session was also videotaped and analyzed. Attendance was monitored.

Questionnaires which the students completed at the end of the semester indicated the following: under this system, the vast majority of students trusted their fellow group members, sustained a feeling of accomplishment, felt responsible to their groups, and felt that they acted responsibly towards others. They also felt that the groups were productive and that the groups gathered more information than any one individual could have gathered alone. In terms of class structure, results indicated an

approximate fifty-fifty split for the following items: fifty-four percent (54%) of the respondents identified attendance as a major problem (half of the sample said "yes," half "no"); forty-six percent (46%) indicated they would have enjoyed participating in group contests; and forty-six percent (46%) indicated that they would have preferred to choose their own members for one group. Approximately eighty percent (80%) of the students felt that each activity should be evaluated on both a group and an individual basis, and that oral presentations are important to a group discussion class.

The information received from these questionnaires suggests that we accomplished our purpose of creating a curriculum in which the goals are clear to the students while encouraging them to work towards a sense of trust, individual learning, individual satisfaction, and group cohesion in the classroom. Cooperative learning techniques were used to achieve this goal. We do not know from our own research whether competitive learning techniques would have achieved the same goal; that is a subject for future research.

Not only did we receive feedback from our students on this issue, but from our colleagues as well. In February, 1985, we received written and verbal responses to a teaching survey which was distributed to a limited number of Small Group Communication Instructors in the Northern California Bay Area. We obtained a twenty percent (20%) response rate, resulting in a sample of twenty instructors. The survey indicated that cooperation in the classroom is considered by instructors to be more conducive to producing student satisfaction (89%) than is competition (5%). Whereas seventy-nine percent (79%) of the sample indicated that cooperation produces greater student productivity, sixteen percent (16%) felt that competition was more

effective.

In answer to a question on methods of evaluation, individual oral performance, group oral performance, and individual tests were ranked as the top three choices for evaluation. The greatest problems encountered in teaching group communication were: 1.) evaluation of student performance (60%), 2.) student dependability (70%), and 3.) student satisfaction (40%). Student attendance (or a lack thereof) was ranked number 4 (40%).

At our February conference, instructors were asked to break into small groups to discuss group communication techniques (innovative or otherwise) that had worked for them in their classrooms. As a result of these break-out sessions, several suggestions were presented:

1. Employ group grading, so that a system of self and peer evaluation is present. Members of the group would evaluate their own performance and the performance of their group members based on objective criteria determined by the group.
2. Relate group discussions to fantasy games by creating dramatic personae, imaginary problems, and the use of role-playing techniques.
3. Invite graduates from the program who are successful in the business world to return and talk to students about the advantages of group communication training.
4. Use the film *Twelve Angry Men* as the basis for discussion of effective and ineffective small group communication techniques.

These suggestions may be incorporated into future curricula.

SUMMARY

The intent of this paper was to provide conceptual and descriptive background for the utilization of cooperative learning strategies in the community college classroom. In order to incorporate these cooperative learning strategies into the classroom, several Speech Communication courses were involved in the development of a pilot curriculum. According to Aronson (1978), systematic research evaluating the Jigsaw technique have been performed only on students in the elementary and secondary levels. He reports, however, that Jigsaw techniques have been incorporated effectively into university curricula. In those cases, students were placed in Jigsaw groups and met on their own time outside of class. Students received only brief assistance from their instructors and were then asked to collect and report research in social psychology. Results showed that:

virtually all of the university students who utilized the jigsaw opportunities reported good results: mastery of the material in far less time than if they would have read it on their own, plus the added enjoyment of companionship and the intellectual stimulation brought about by the sharing of a variety of perspectives (Aronson, Blaney, Stephen, Sikes, & Snapp, 1978, p. 129).

Our small group communication pilot curriculum supports these findings.

As instructors of Speech Communication courses at the Community College level, we found cooperative learning strategies to be beneficial and worthy of pursuit in future course development. In most cases students in this curriculum demonstrated high achievement, high levels of

satisfaction, and an enjoyment of their interactions with fellow group members. Results of the instructor survey showed that most instructors agreed with the students in their positive evaluation of the cooperative classroom, although it should be noted that competition was not completely discounted as a learning tool.

More specifically, several observations can be made based on our personal experience. The contractual agreement made between the student and instructor was successful in that it clarified expectations of coursework and final evaluation. Frustrations regarding attendance were alleviated by the objective measure determined by the contract. Pressures to conform to the initial contract were minimized by the students' ability to renegotiate. This increased the cooperative interaction between student and teacher.

The activities chosen to represent the Jigsaw model were effective in creating a cooperative classroom; however, several problems did arise. The pre-test and post-test which were administered during the semester showed no significant differences in test scores. Further research in the development of a satisfactory achievement test is needed. Also, the model demands a total commitment on the part of the instructor to evaluate journals and papers at least three times during the semester in addition to the other activities called for in the contract.

It is our belief that cooperative learning strategies provide an important alternative to competition in education. Further systematic study is required to determine which mode of learning creates the greatest student achievement in the Community College classroom. Based on the demonstration presented here, we feel that the intrinsic rewards of student satisfaction, trust, and self-esteem were highly evident. We agree with

Aronson that:

our ultimate goal is for children [and adults] to begin to learn that cooperation is appropriate, functional, exciting, and humanizing in many more situations than they might have realized. . . . As we have seen, high standards and good performance are not necessarily incompatible with support, friendship, empathy, and a tolerance for individual differences (Aronson, et. al., 1978, p. 134).

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APPENDIX A

TEACHING SURVEY
BAST, 1985

FOR EACH OF THE FOLLOWING ITEMS, CHECK THE APPROPRIATE RESPONSE.

1. How many full-time instructors are employed in your Speech Communication Department? _____
2. Does your Department offer a course in small group communication?
Yes _____ No _____
3. If not, does your Department teach small group communication as part of any basic speech communication course?
Yes _____ No _____ N/A _____
4. Is your small group communication course offered each semester/quarter?
Yes _____ No _____
5. How many sections does your Department offer?
None _____ 1 - 4 _____ 5 - 7 _____ 7 - 10 _____
6. Your small group communication course meets which of the following criteria? (Check those that apply.)
Lower division _____ Upper division _____
Major requirement _____ General Ed. _____
7. Do you, personally, teach small group communication?
Yes _____ No _____
8. Do you enjoy teaching small group communication courses?
Yes _____ No _____
9. What types of assignments do you include in your curriculum? (Check those that apply.)
Problem-solving grp. activity _____ Social/Value grp. _____
Information-gathering grp. _____ Group papers _____
Other (Identify) _____

10. Rank order the following (1-8) in terms of their relative importance as methods of evaluation.

Individual oral performance _____
Group oral performance _____
Individual research papers _____
Group research papers _____
Group productivity _____
Individual tests _____
Videotape _____
Journal _____

11. Do you encourage academic competition among groups?

Yes _____

No _____

12. Which of the following types of classroom environments do you feel produces greater student productivity?

Cooperative _____ Competitive _____

13. Which of the following types of classroom environments do you feel produces greater student satisfaction?

Cooperative _____ Competitive _____

14. What are the greatest problems you have encountered in teaching group communication? (Rank order the following in terms of their relative importance.)

Evaluation of student performance _____
Student attendance _____
Student dependability _____
Student satisfaction _____
Group cohesion _____
Teacher satisfaction _____

APPENDIX B

SPEECH 2
GROUP DISCUSSION
SPRING, 1985

STUDENT CONTRACT

To receive an A grade, a student will complete the following requirements:

Journal: A journal will be maintained representing each classroom meeting for the entire semester. The journal should include an analysis of the group process and personal reactions to group encounters. Use the text, *Group Process*, for your analysis of group interactions.

Two Research Papers: Two 4-page research papers which summarize the research gathered for each group discussion assignment. References should be included.

Three Group Discussions: Students must participate in all three group discussions. Grading of the discussion assignments will be based on an average of the individual's performance (journal and paper) and the group's performance in completing the assignment.

Videotape Critiques: Each group discussion will be videotaped. Students must observe and critique each presentation. Also, one preparation session must be videotaped and observed.

Attendance: 0 - 3 absences will be allowed.

Grades: A or B quality work must be maintained to receive an A grade IF the preceding requirements are met.

Name: _____

I agree to satisfy the requirements for the A grade. If I choose to change my contract, I may do so with instructor approval.

SPEECH 2
GROUP DISCUSSION
SPRING, 1985

STUDENT CONTRACT

To receive a B grade, a student will complete the following requirements:

Three Group
Discussions:

Students must participate in all three group
discussion assignments.

Two Research
Papers:

Two 4-page papers which summarize the research
gathered for each group discussion assignment.
References should be included.

Videotape
Critiques:

Each group discussion will be videotaped. Students
must observe and critique each presentation. Also,
one preparation session must be videotaped and
observed.

Attendance:

4 - 6 absences will be allowed.

Grades:

B or C quality work must be maintained to receive a B
grade IF the preceding requirements are satisfied.

Name: _____

I agree to satisfy the requirements for the B grade. If I choose to change
the contract, I may do so with instructor approval.

SPEECH 2
GROUP DISCUSSION
SPRING, 1985

STUDENT CONTRACT

To receive a CREDIT or C grade, a student will complete the following requirements:

Two Group
Discussions:

Students must participate in two group discussion assignments. Also, when not participating in one group discussion, the student must observe and evaluate another group's preparation sessions.

One Research
Paper:

One 4-page research paper which summarizes the research gathered for one group discussion assignment. References should be included.

Videotape
Critiques:

Each group discussion will be videotaped. Students must observe and critique each presentation. Also, one preparation session must be videotaped and observed.

Attendance:

7 - 9 absences will be allowed.

Grades:

C quality work must be maintained to receive a CREDIT or C grade IF the preceding requirements are satisfied.

Name: _____

I agree to satisfy the requirements for a CREDIT or C grade. If I choose to change the contract, I may do so with instructor approval.